

an agreement, abide by it. Simply put, a promise is a promise. Unfortunately, the pending amendment from the chairman of the Armed Services Committee would undermine this basic tenet.

Last year, Democrats and Republicans made an agreement. Democrats were committed to helping the middle class. Republicans were focused only on the Pentagon. Ultimately, we reached a compromise that was based on the principle of parity. We want to help the military, and they should be helped, but there should also be help for programs that are also important for our national security that are not the Pentagon. We provided additional resources to the Pentagon, as I said, but we also provided the same level of help for the middle class. That included improving our security through efforts of domestic agencies like the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Homeland Security, and others. That was our agreement, but now some Republicans want to break their word. Senate Republicans are demanding billions more from the Pentagon but refuse to provide an extra penny for the middle class, and that is wrong. It is completely inconsistent with last year's agreement, and it is blind to the many serious needs here at home that Republicans continue to ignore, and Zika is one. That is why I support the amendment offered by the distinguished Senator from Rhode Island, JACK REED, along with the leader we have on the Appropriations Committee, BARBARA MIKULSKI.

The Reed-Mikulski amendment would provide the same extra support for our middle class that Senator MCCAIN is demanding for the Pentagon, and it recognizes that our security depends on more than just the Defense Department. The Reed amendment includes more funding to address the dangerous Zika virus and fight the scourge of opioids. It also would help mitigate lead contamination, which is long overdue, in Flint, MI.

This amendment strengthens domestic security through support of the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security. It will improve airport security and community policing, and it will address the threat of cyber crime and terrorism.

The amendment by the Senator from Rhode Island and the Senator from Maryland will create jobs and address our Nation's crumbling infrastructure. It will not only improve our transportation system but medical facilities for our veterans and our National Park System.

The Reed amendment is also an investment in our future. The legislation will promote science and innovation through support for the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, among others, and it will support education.

I urge my colleagues to support this important proposal which will make America a better and stronger country.

The bottom line is this: A promise is a promise. The middle class needs help at least as much as the Pentagon. Republicans should keep their promise to hard-working American families.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2943, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2943) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McCain amendment No. 4229, to address unfunded priorities of the Armed Forces.

Reed/Mikulski amendment No. 4549 (to amendment No. 4229), to authorize parity for defense and nondefense spending pursuant to the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

AMENDMENT NO. 4549

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise to discuss my amendment, which will provide partial relief from the caps imposed by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 on both the defense and nondefense portions of the budget for fiscal year 2017. The chairman has offered an amendment that will provide relief for the Department of Defense activities. My amendment will provide a comparable amount of relief for activities that are beyond the Department of Defense but critical to our national security and critical to our national economy.

It is long past time to replace the senseless sequester with a balanced approach that keeps America safe and strong at home and abroad. Senator MCCAIN and I both believe that sequestration has to be eliminated. What I would suggest is that it has to be done in a balanced way. It has to keep the intent of the Bipartisan Budget Act and the Budget Control Act by treating defense and nondefense spending equally.

Let me also be clear. The bill before us provides the amount outlined under current law as well as the budget request of the Secretary of Defense who, along with the Service Secretaries and Chiefs, has testified in support of this amount. They certainly would like more, but they have testified that for this year these resources are at least adequate. Now they have also made it very clear that if we do go into sequestration in the next year, it would be absolutely devastating to the Depart-

ment of Defense. As a result, we share—the chairman and I—the same commitment to ensuring that sequestration is eliminated and we move to a more rational budget process.

These military professionals would like to have the certainty of year-long funding at the committee level reported at least. That certainly is extremely important. I don't think they want to roll the dice. They recognize that this lengthy fight for parity could last all the way through this year. I believe what they would like to see us do is what they said in their testimony. We can operate under the budget as proposed by the President, as recognized in the underlying budget committee mark, and that will give us the certainty we need.

The bill reported out of the Senate Armed Services Committee includes \$523.9 billion in discretionary spending for defense base budget requirements and \$58.9 billion for overseas contingency operations, or OCO account. It includes \$19.3 billion for Department of Energy-related activities resulting in a top-line funding level of approximately \$602 billion for discretionary national defense spending.

While these funding levels adhere to the spending limits mandated by the Bipartisan Budget Act, or BBA, concerns have rightly been raised that the Department may require additional resources to carry out the missions it has been assigned and to adequately maintain the readiness of our military forces. As my colleagues are aware, when the Senate considered the BBA last fall, it established the discretionary funding level for defense spending for fiscal year 2017. That agreement passed this Chamber with support from Senators from both political parties. Furthermore, the BBA split the increase in discretionary spending evenly between the defense and nondefense categories.

It is important to remember that we have repeatedly made incremental changes to the discretionary budget caps for both defense and nondefense accounts. We have done so in order to provide some budgetary certainty to the Department of Defense and our domestic agencies. These spending caps were first revised with the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013, and most recently with the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015.

In each instance, bipartisan majorities in Congress voted to increase the spending caps and provide additional resources, evenly split between defense and nondefense accounts. Unfortunately, providing relief to the budget caps for defense spending, as the underlying amendment by the chairman proposes, while taking no action on nondefense spending, would renege on those bipartisan agreements and the sense of common purpose that motivated us in the last several adjustments to the Sequestration Act.

In contrast, my amendment, would keep the pressure on for a permanent